

Washington, DC - In an unprecedented initiative, the leaders of four prominent groups in the 111th Congress – the Progressive Caucus (CPC), the Black Caucus (CBC), the Hispanic Caucus (CHC), and the Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) – have sent a joint letters to President Obama (ATTACHED) and the Democratic Leadership of the House and Senate stressing that ‘our support for enacting legislation this year to guarantee affordable health care for all firmly hinges on the inclusion of a robust public health insurance plan like Medicare.’

Together, one hundred seventeen Members of the House and Senate belong to at least one of these four congressional caucuses. Hence, their unity in pushing for inclusion of a public health insurance plan like Medicare as part of comprehensive health care reform legislation is a formidable development in the unfolding policy debate inside and outside of Congress.

“As the debate on health care moves forward, we stand together with one voice for the communities that most need this reform,” said Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, Chairwoman of the 24-Member CHC. “With one out of every three Hispanics in our country likely to be uninsured and with so many Latino small business owners, we have to provide all Americans with the choice of a public health insurance plan.”

“The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that does not provide universal health care,” said Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus. “In a nation with 46 million uninsured individuals, it is time we put in place high quality comprehensive care for all. As we develop healthcare reform legislation, a public health insurance plan like Medicare and Medicaid must be included in order to guarantee equal access to quality affordable healthcare for everyone.”

“The importance of this issue is shown through the unity of the four caucuses,” said Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva, Co-Chair of the CPC. “We represent the most underrepresented communities, in which livelihoods are paralyzed due to health care being set as a privilege. We stand united to ensure health care is a right. A right that is fair and guaranteed for all.”

“The American people are united in declaring that our health care system is broken, and that we need to fix it,” said Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Co-Chair of the CPC. “With this letter, more than a 100 Members of Congress are sending a message that we share the public’s outrage, and that we are committed to confronting this problem and developing a health care system that doesn’t leave anyone out. That’s why we need to make certain that any final healthcare reform legislation includes the option of a public health insurance plan to ensure that everyone has access to high quality, affordable care.”

“For too long, insurance companies have dictated the quality, quantity, and accessibility of healthcare to the American people,” said Congressman Mike Honda, Chair of Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC). “A robust public health insurance plan will ensure true competition with those companies that reap egregious profits, and will present the opportunity to make deep, lasting changes in our healthcare system. A public plan will also provide a framework to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in some of the most underserved communities.”

